

Chapter 11 Psychic Aspects

The psychic aspect of the dance has been mentioned many times, largely because it does not seem to have been mentioned in literature. Talk to the dancer and she will recognize your meaning, whereas the strict (sic) logician may not. Every dancer has her feelings, emotions, and reactions, and she lives in that world more than practical people live within themselves. The psychic realm, in a sense, forms a bridge of vibrations between the seen and unseen portions of the universe. Psychic sciences have been recognized in some countries, ignored in others. To the unacquainted, the word "psychic" suggests the medium, the real or fancied communication with the dead, and similar phenomena. But there is no more reason to ignore them than there should be to ignore the chemistry of explosives because children play with firecrackers.

Every movement of the body involves forces, some of them not being sensuous, whether material or not. The adjectives "subtle," "etheric," "metaphysical," and "occult" often have too nebulous a connotation to impress us. Pure objectivity is a rarity. When it becomes confused with materiality and sensual phenomena, we reach a limit of knowledge. The barrier, however, is of our own making.

Around the body is an aura, or maybe several auras, forming an aureole or aurora (originally this was a Semitic word meaning "light upon light"). It is not universally recognized as yet, though its existence has not been experimentally disproved. We know little of its composition, yet from it the "ectoplasm" of psychic research emanates. Under certain conditions, the vibrations of the aura can be photographed. Clairvoyants claim to see it, or at least its colors. Both its colors and lines of force appear to have significance, and the aura may result from an admixture of several types of energies.

We live and move in a realm of psychic forces, and they move in and through us. The aura changes in size and luminescence according to our emotional condition. It appears to react to other influences and to expand in moments of exaltation, pain, duress and cosmic love. Indeed as our outlook expands, so does it expand. When we fall into self-pity, it contracts. As our thoughts tend toward the earth, it assumes one color, and as they rise toward heaven, it takes on another color. Emotions, also, affect its hues.

The aura is not developed by direct means. It follows us, not we it. As we change physically, emotionally, mentally, morally or spiritually, it becomes altered. When our development attains to a certain height, it becomes as a lamp of pure light. Then even a sensitive person will recognize it. And many who are not clairvoyant can, in a sense, feel a developed aura.

The study of both static and dynamic symmetry in the sense used here shows that there is a living center in each of us. This acts as the nucleus of the aura, as a potential lamp. When we sit in one spot, as for example in a chair at home, we leave our vibrations upon it. The more we sit there, the more comforting it seems. It is because we have come back to our own atmosphere, in a sense, to our "home." We delight in our own beds. In strange places, we feel strangeness. This is because the aura, which is the personal atmosphere, rests best when it returns to its haunts. It sends its magnetism into the space we cover or upon the spot where we stand. It relaxes best when it returns to the same places or spaces.

One can conceive the body as a huge dynamo with fields of forces all around and through it. These fields may be more complete and complex than those around an iron bar-magnet, an elec-

tromagnet or a charged wire. Both Vedantists and Sufis, as well as other inner schools, have taught that we inhabit or inherit several bodies. To them, the soul is covered by many sheaths, separated by qualities and properties and vibrational ranges. We may refer to them as heart-body, mind-body, physical-body, etc., instead of repeating their Oriental names. These bodies are concentric so far as space is concerned, the “central sun” and “heart” being related.

Every word, action, thought and feeling that we produce or react to has its concomitant vibrational movement. The energies thereof pass along lines or curves in the field of the personal atmosphere. The higher energies give rise to lower energies or undertones. The psychic currents belong to this class, being between mind and body. The consumption or wastages of these energies weakens us. Their restoration strengthens us. Right breathing, silence, repose and relaxation are among the best means of restoring our bodies and minds, but diet is not to be overlooked. As the “metaphysical” vibrations have their undertones and overtones, what is best for one sheath benefits the others.

No art is so intricately related to psychic forces as is the dance. Of course, we might except love-making, if it is to be restored to that rank, as it is hoped, but otherwise the dance stands pre-eminent in this respect. If a dancer were to stand in one spot and either not take her feet away or merely move in a small area around it, her atmosphere would permeate that region. As she moves over a greater area, her atmosphere would cover that, too. A spot may be magnetized by dancing or whirling upon or around it. In ancient times, magnetism was supposed to be drawn to altars by such dancing and circumambulation. The devotees would feel that magnetism. The prelate would use it in blessing. In the true blessing, the minister or priest makes use of the highest vibrations toward which he can set as a condenser and share them with the worshippers.

We can study the psychic forces involved in religious rituals and in the “stances” and postures of prayers. Hands clasped together; hands with palm to palm pointing upward; the same placed just before the heart; hands extended upward and outward; moving joined hands upward or downward—all these are more than symbols. They have definite meanings, they represent realities, they touch the realms unseen.

In a few parts of the Orient, mudras, or finger postures, are employed in religious ceremonies. It is difficult to delineate these mudric rituals from dances, as the two merge into each other imperceptibly. Where the priest performs, it is a rite, where he is absent it is a dance. One might say that the prayer is static and the religious dance dynamic though their intentions be the same.

A word or two might not be out of place here with respect to the use of the “V” sign as a symbol for victory. Whether the originator of it was aware or not, the writing, scrawling, tracing, and marking of this letter is a direct application of psychic power. Germans have used this power ever since their establishment of the totalitarian state. Adolph Hitler’s voice is very magnetic, even hypnotic. He seems to have had a mentor who gave him excellent instruction. And we may need psychic vehicles as well as physical stratospheric planes to overcome him and his satellites. So every repetition of **V-for-Victory** by speech, word and gesture should be effective. To these we may add prayer, stretching out our arms toward heaven as we do, making the sign of supplication in the form of a V. And dancers can include this movement, and so evoke psychic power.

There are two extremes to be avoided. One is to assume that movements have no particular meaning, and that perhaps dances have no meaning. The other is to permit thought to become as a weight, and to be overcautious in action. The Brahmsian philosophy was that music, though born of

the heart, had no especially mental significance or might "mean all things to all men." This point of view has made headway in painting and leads to the ridiculous in interior decoration. The opposite view, or Duncanism, in dancing might turn to "drunken-ism," unless there be insight and inspiration. Beauty has its own language; it is for the artist to employ and for the audience to enjoy.

Every muscular movement affects certain nerves and sinews and has its definite psychic aftermath. In the chapter on sex, and elsewhere, some attention has been paid to particular examples of its actions. A true discussion of sex, however, cannot be divorced from the study of life. Sex is not the aim of life so much as life is the aim of sex. That is why it is included in a treatise on spirituality.

The march, as has been stated, has direct and definite psychic import. Bands play patriotic music as the soldiers march by. There is a fervor, cheering, the waving of handkerchiefs, the throwing of hats. It belongs to the same general psychic whirl. Indeed, mobs are moved psychically far more readily than the individual is. Every movement of the body has its psychic import. It is possible to tell character from walk and gesture. Observation, together with an intuitive perception, makes it easy.

Now, how can the dance be used as a psychic prophylactic? Can it at the same time correct extreme tendencies while promoting grace, finesse, and agility? Can it aid in restoring vitality to the body? Can it be employed in rejuvenation? Yes, no doubt the dance almost of itself awakens the "jinn" in us. That is why dancers appear more youthful, for the "jinn" or genius is not so covered with materiality or bestiality. Again, the movements and themes of the dance suggest to the participant moods which of themselves work in the direction of life, away from senescence and "that tired feeling." As long as one feels free, it is well, but when personal efforts are made, there may be an unfortunate action. To get the best results from psychic power one has to move beyond the ego's sway.

Is there a secret to rejuvenation? Let us propose that physically it is connected with vitamins and hormones. Psychically it is interlinked with the balance between Yang and Yin, with the control of currents and forces, and with the sublimation of pelvic sexual activity. Mentally, it is dependent upon one's motive, the purpose from which he cannot easily be swayed. To these may be added the ability to draw in life energy with the breath and to recognize our dependence upon or oneness with an all-pervading Deity, or its equivalent. This is not offered as an exact recipe, however. We have not reached omniscience.

Here we must avoid by all means the temptation of Faust. We should not sell our souls, so to speak, to any devil, personal or otherwise. Monkey glands are not the receptacles of eternal grace. Yet, there is an intuition which has never been eradicated from men's minds, that longevity is a possibility, and that it is connected with the mysteries of life, perhaps with a "kingdom of heaven." That is why heart-concentration is stressed, because when we can draw incessantly upon the heart, we help to make the "kingdom" manifest here and now. We express immortality without leaving earth.

Another psychic aspect of the dance is the growth of sensitivity. This begins with a greater awareness of the body, mind and emotions of oneself and others. People are attracted or repelled as if instinctively, unaware of the surrounding psychic energies. Impulse plays a part in it, but that does not explain anything. We are compelled to battle with impulses all day. We do not realize how much fatigue comes therefrom. It has been said that people do not die of hard work. Real hardship comes from constant battling against foes within and without, seen and unseen. It comes from incessant struggling with social, mental, and psychic forces. In this battle, victory does not come easily.

Spiritual Dancing

Sensitive people may be easily aroused and are often perturbed about small things. They have finer constitutions and may not be able to help themselves in that respect. Dancers may suddenly rebel against the music, the scenery, the costumes, about one or a thousand things. This is regarded as a sign of that “temperament” so often found in artistic people. But the word “temperament” does not explain its source, cause or cure. There is certainly disturbance of mind. There are apparently uncontrolled emotions.

Everything in this world has its vibrations. There is an occult science known as psychometry which treats with the human recognition of these vibrations. Its adepts appear capable of reading the history of any article they touch, or of any room they enter. Psychometric power is often an unconscious faculty. A gross person would not notice what a dainty person feels, and if he did notice, it would not mean much to him.

The knowledge of the breath and of the forces connected with it, and an understanding of the “elements” and how they operate through the personality would enable one to respond to, and to control psychic forces. And although spiritual development should never be undertaken for the sake of attaining strange powers, it often happens that its adepts do gain supernormal faculties. By these means and others one can control the storms of temperament. And if nothing else suffices, periodical periods of quiet or meditation will do it. We are here on earth and we have to face the problems of earth even while we are struggling onward toward better things.

The world is as yet in the cradle of psychic studies. The learned object to the inroads that the ignorant have made in that direction. We do not study physics for the sake of making refrigerators, nor chemistry merely to manufacture better bombs—although in a depraved society this may be so. In other words, a true science is not finalistic. So metaphysics, parapsychology and cognate studies must be learned in the same spirit as the accepted sciences are.

In this sense, too, we would add aesthetics to the sciences. We would give greater scope to beauty in life, nor yet insist that truth is beauty and beauty is truth. The free man does not insist.